1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

411 size, from those used in the plains. The plains blacksmith does recognize the Hill Maria's individual taste in such matters, but that 326 taste is always being modified by the sight, occasional use and occasional purchase of plains types, particularly if, when a new weapon is wanted in a hurry, only the latter are immediately available.

411 The blade of the average Maria knife measures 13 to 15 cm. from the point to the beginning of the tang. It is about 2·5 cm. broad where the tang begins, and from there the cutting edge curves inwards for a quarter or a fifth of its length, thence tapering with a slight convex curve to the point, which is 2 or 3 cm. to the side of the axis of the handle. The reverse edge is about 3 mm. thick in the tang, the thickness gradually diminishing towards the point. The tang is a continuation of the thick side of the blade, about 8 mm. wide where it leaves the blade and tapering for about 3·5 or 4 cm. to a pointed end. Except where it is continued in this tang, the blade has a horizontal bottom. The tang is heated and so burned into the wooden handle; the blacksmith, with this as all iron tools and weapons, supplies only the iron, and the buyer makes his own handle. The edge is produced in the first place by hammering on each side, followed by rubbing down a whet-stone. Being made of soft iron smelted from local ore, these knives can be given an extremely sharp point and fine edge. They are not usually [412] taken back to the smith to be sharpened, but are whetted on a stone; there is often a flat, black, polished, communal whet-stone outside the men's dormitory (*gotal*) in a hill village.

411 Besides fitting the tang into a short, cylindrical, wooden handle, about 6·5 to 7·5 cm. long, and in diameter 2 cm. at the base and 322 somewhat thinner where the tang enters it, the Hill Maria makes a wooden sheath of two flat pieces of wood trimmed roughly to the shape of the blade, each of which has on one side a low flange slightly more than half as thick as the thick edge of the blade. The two flat pieces are laid on each other, the flanged edges together, and are joined by whipping of twine, *kosa* silk or millimetre-wide thin thongs of hide at the broad top, over a groove round the centre of the sheath, and near its point. The sheath is often carved, ●[531] favourite designs being rough lozenges in relief on a bar, or a bar indented, or bands of three parallel lines.

411 This knife the Maria uses for slicing bamboo and all ordinary cutting purposes; holding the handle loosely in his hand he uses its full weight for chopping with the concave portion of the blade pieces of wood up to 3 cm. in diameter, getting a surprisingly straight cross-section; he usually chops all round the circumference to a depth of a third of the diameter, then breaks off the portion to

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

are made either of similar but lighter pole stockading, or of what the Hill Marias call *tuss*, that is, fencing of grass fastened in vertical bundles between pairs of horizontal bamboo struts, which themselves are fastened at intervals to poles planted in the ground. The floors, walls and partitions are plastered with mud, the walls on the inside, and the partitions on both sides; the women do the plastering, while their men look on. They often do not plaster the veranda wall at all. They sometimes make the side walls of bamboo wattlework instead of pole stockading. They do not char or otherwise treat the bases of the poles before fixing them in the ground. The first post of the house is almost always of the sacred *saja* tree; I have not seen this adorned with bundles of thatching grass in the manner of other Gonds (cf. Russell and Hiralal, III, p. 122), but I have seen two *saja* trees near a house under construction so adorned. The youths sometimes paint the plastered partitions in white with rows of dots, with swastikas like those tattooed on girls' faces (see p. 74 above), or with crude crocodiles or tigers; I have seen women's breasts represented in relief.

The grass (rarely palm) thatch rests on bamboos tied across the roof beams, and is secured against wind by bamboos criss-crossed outside the thatch. The grass generally used is *dab* (*Pollinea argentea*) which appears in the *ponda* fields after the first harvest has been reaped, and in the second or third year covers them so thickly that they have to be abandoned. In March, after the harvest has been finished, you will see near all the recently abandoned *ponda* clearings extensive *dab* cuttings, the grass being stacked on rough log platforms about a foot and a half above the ground in readiness for re-thatching the houses just before the break of the monsoon. The men re-thatch houses, granaries, pig-sties and temples every year.

The usual form of door is a rectangle of split bamboo wickerwork sliding between two pairs of upright wooden posts. The doorway has often a wicker-work threshold from one to two feet high, over which the sliding door fits. There are always doors in the doorways leading from outside into the veranda, from the veranda to the *aggadi*, and at the back of the menstruation room; generally also in the doorways leading into the *lowa*; but I have never seen a door in the front doorway of the menstruation room. Sometimes the whole of this room is not taboo to men, the *binda* or mud threshold that marks the limit of the tabooed ground (see p. 106) being constructed across the floor of the room some two feet beyond the front entrance. Occasionally more elaborate doors will be seen, made of a small hewn wooden plank with tangs of wood left

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

A little later they collect *kapani*, the wild bearded rice common in all old rice fields and fallows and at the edges of standing water, by holding a winnowing-fan in one hand and beating the grain of the standing ripe plants into it with the other; the bearded ears are sometimes plaited into '*sela*' fringes for ornamenting doors of houses at the new-eating festivals.

The men are adept in collecting the honey of various kinds of bees, though sometimes, despite forest rules, too prone to save trouble by felling rather than climbing a fine tree. For this purpose, and for tapping palm trees, they often fasten to the trunks of trees long thick bamboos, cutting the side shoots down to stumps four or five inches long to serve as ladder rungs. Gums are collected from many species of trees, for use as bird-lime or in securing the *kosa* silk whipping of arrow-heads, etc. In Dantewara and Bijapur tahsils the Forest Department has quantities of *tasar* silk cocoons collected by Bison-horn Maria men when, in the rains in the intervals between sowing and reaping their various crops, they go out to the forests in search of such delicacies as red ants' nests, ant-eaters, rats, squirrels and grubs. The cocoons are high on sal or *saja* trees; where the climbers cannot reach them they use long bamboo poles with a piece of bamboo fastened at an acute angle at the end to serve as a hook. They get about Rs. 3 a thousand cocoons from the Koshta weavers who employ them; the Hill Maria, however, generally collects only what cocoons he needs for his own purposes. Red ants' nests are cooked, leaves, ants and all, either with *pej* or *gato*, or by themselves and eaten with pulses as a vegetable. They are also a favourite febrifuge; a rough and ready remedy is to shake out the live red ants on to the patient's skull, when the formic acid of their stings is said to reduce the fever; the more elaborate method is to boil the nest, ants and all, and to strain off and use the juice as a febrifuge in small doses; this juice is said to taste sharper than any lime and believed to be invaluable for a long-standing fever. In collecting the palms of the dwarf palms *chhind* (*Phoenix sylvestris*), *P. acaulis*, and *buta chhind* (*P. farinifera*) for use for thatching, basketry or making rough cords for binding fences, the men not only collect the small dates or the flowers (according to season) and the edible pith of the *buta chhind*, but also the fat white grub of a certain beetle, which is also found in the stems of the toddy palm and in fresh green monsoon bamboo shoots. This is eaten fried in ghee or oil with a little spice and chillies, and is regarded as a great delicacy; it is sold in the Jagdalpur market for three or four pice, and even high-caste Hindus buy it. When white ants emerge in flying swarms early in the monsoon they collect them after they have shed their wings, or pull the wings

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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There are other clans which I have not been able to fit into the scheme of phratries—the Hurra clan with its clan-god Lingo Mudial at Semurgaon, the Karati with its *bhum* at Phunder, the Vetti which has the lizard as its totem and the Kodovetti which has the mongoose. These, of course, fit into the scheme of *akomāma* and *dādābhai* relationships of their own neighbourhood.

FIG. 15. Decorated Muria knife
Length 1' 5"

There are not many songs about the clans. I give one Jhoria Pata from Sirpuri.

Those who kindle fire in the field
are boys of the Uika clan.
How strong the Uika boys are!
Those who make a hearth with brinjals from the Panara's house are boys of the Maravi clan.
Those who sit on a gate and call it a horse are boys of the Maravi clan.
How strong the Maravi boys are!
Those who build a hearth of pig's droppings are boys of the Halami clan.
Those who sit to clean their teeth with a twig are boys of the Halami clan.
How strong the Halami boys are!
Those who blow the buffalo horn are boys of the Halami clan.
Those who throw fine rice on the road are boys of the Halami clan.
How strong the Halami boys are!

II. THE ORIGIN OF THE CLANS

Many of the clans derive their origin from some historic journey in the course of which a river had to be crossed. Others have local and special reasons for their origin.

This legend of crossing a river is known throughout central India. Many Gond, Baiga and Agaria trace their clans and the attachment of those clans to certain totems from this.[1] In Muria mythology we are sometimes told

[1] Compare, for such tales in the Central Provinces alone, Russell and Hiralal, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 61ff.; Grignon, *op. cit.*, p. 241; C. G. C. Trench, *Grammar of Gondi* (Madras, 1919), Vol. II, pp. 8ff.; Elwin, *The Agaria*, p. 73; M. P. Buradkar, 'Totemism among the Gonds.', *Man in India*, Vol. XX (1940), pp. 120 and 277f.; *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part III B, p. 77 (the Gond emigrating from Phuljhar cross the Gondki river in flood).

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Kai pila koli bhilu pila kole. — Whose was the child? It was a bear's child.

Kāka buba balade dulha ke buba balade. — Whom will he call father? The bridegroom.

Kāke āya balade dulhi ke āya balade. — Whom will he call mother? The bride.

Kai rāg men gāge de hur hur balede. — To what tune will she weep? *Hur hur.*

Ama pān chiro chāro. — The mango leaf sounds *chiro charo.*

Dulha chotli kira paro ach. — There are maggots in the bridegroom's penis

Mande pude kurri. — Loudly cry 'Vagina'.

2

Goti roy dodon banjāra aya! — O the Banjara's bullock, mother!

Noni bona roy sudha dāki noni? — With whom will you go, girl?

Māma na marri mantor go āya. — There is my *māma's* son, mother.

Noni miya jori pobe roy noni. — He's not fit to be your mate, girl.

Ona roy sudha hanma roy noni. — Do not go with him, girl.

Gere mara jori roy ade jori pibo. — He is as bad as a pair of gere trees.

Ona re suda hanon roya āya. — I will not go with him, mother.

Aich mande pude kaudi bandhla. — Under the booth is a vagina tied with a cowrie.

Dulhe kandi bhursa. — And breasts like a brown pot.

Leka cho chotli bhursa! — O the penis of the brown boy!

Ama pān siro sāro. — The mango leaves sound *siro sāro.*

Leki cho pudi kira paro kurri. — The girl's vagina is full of maggots.

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Before the kalsa-pitcher is put in its place by the central pillar of the booth, it is decorated, sometimes beautifully and with great elaboration. Red, yellow and black grain is stuck with cow-dung in varied patterns, or stars and lines of dots are made in white and black. While two of the older women are doing this, the motiari stand by and sing.

Song

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Riri loyo ri ri lo rilo ri ri loyo ri ri lo ri ri lo ri ri loyo ri ri lo

Ursa wenjing karsa wo dai. — The pot is decorated with rice, mother.

Nena karsa kotikān dai. — I place a mark on the pot, mother.

Bāti wenjing kotikin bābu? — With what kind of rice will you decorate it, boy?

Hinga wenji kotikān dai. — I will use *hinga* rice, mother.

Bona suda kotikin bābu? — With whom will you decorate it, boy?

Atin miyār manta roy dai. — With my *māmi's* daughter, mother.

Tāna suda kotikān dai. — I will decorate the pot for her, mother.

Tāna suda parwin roy bābu. — You won't be able to do it for her, boy.

Tāna jorti āywi roy bābu. — She is no fit mate for you, boy.

Tāral tamor biti roy bābu. — She has brothers, boy.

Halār bhai biti roy bābu. — She has sisters and brothers, boy.

Awa bābo biti roy bābu. — She has a mother and father, boy.

Nālum arik wāla wo dai. — But I am willing, mother.

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796 As they did so they all yelled at the animals, 'Don't trouble us or we'll give you nothing next time'. One pig refused to eat—it had been offered as a fine; the donor's wife was a witch—and this showed the enormity of the offence which it was expected to condone. But the people did not take it back; they cried, 'We offered it willingly, but you refused, yet we give it all the same'. One man asked for a son, but they shouted to the gods, 'No, give him a daughter'.

[411]

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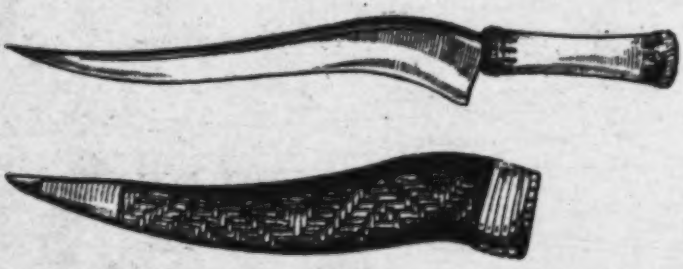

FIG. 32. Muria knife and sheath, of a type often used in sacrifice

796 After the animals had been fed, the priest offered three brass rings for three men who had died during the past year, saying 'Let them now be mingled with
782 the Departed'. Then the animals were killed. The priest put his knife upright between the toes of his right foot, plucked some of the feathers, cut off the head of the chick and sprinkled the blood over the rice and the gods. He killed the pigs by holding them down firmly and sawing off the heads, which he placed facing outwards before the line of rice. As the first pig was killed the worshippers stood with folded hands crying, 'Let the village folk be well; let there be good crops this year; let our animals, cows, pigs, goats and hens be well.' As they killed the second pig, they cried, 'Though it didn't eat, show whether you accept it or no'. They watched eagerly to see how many times the automatic action of the muscles would open the mouth of the decapitated head. Slowly the mouth opened and shut three times and the people were pleased, for this was a sign that the penalty pig had been accepted and all was well.

Similar offerings were made to all the gods, or at least a little blood was sprinkled on them. After a pause, the priest offered the mango, char and karmata fruits, cutting them in half, and removing the stones.

796 Now the women and motiari approached and the Anga went dancing to meet them. He stood before them, and they offered him liquor—'When a Gondi god drinks even one cup of liquor, he talks and dances very well', said one of my guides. Then the chelik picked up their big dhol drums and danced in a long straight line, shuffling to and fro, drumming very vigorously and crying loudly as they changed their direction. The women and girls also danced in a line, and all the Siraha-mediums began to throw themselves about and play and dance, generally carrying one of the gods in their hands. A Naitami boy had come to the wrong place and he picked up the Gutal Lalu and was dancing with it. But the Poyami people resented this, and took it from him with loud abuse.

The dancing, drumming and drinking continued till sundown, when the meat with the fruit and rice was cooked. Then the people—men and women—

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as it was under its leaf-cup, they proceed to dig holes to take the four corner pillars of the house. If, as they dig, they come across white ants they move the site. They put four pillars into the holes and tie a garland of mango leaves round them. After this they proceed to build in the usual way.

At Phunder the boys put a grass 'top-knot' on the roof and a small flag, the *chelik-bairag* or Palo Pen, so that 'all might know it was a ghotul'.

Such are the main types of building; what of the decorations and the furniture? These vary greatly from place to place. They are least ornate to the north and east, most carefully imagined and executed in the west central parganas, in the typical Jhoria area.

Doors are sometimes very small, sometimes large and heavy, occasionally of light bamboo, sometimes carved as at Bandopal; sometimes there is no door at all. Often there is an arrangement for shutting the door from inside—a latch falls into a wooden hook attached to the door. But it is interesting that there is no means of shutting the house from outside: the ghotul is never locked up. It is a shrine and no one would steal from it.

As you move west across the centre of the Muria country you find more, and more elaborate carving. The ghotul has stimulated artistic creation, not only in the realm of personal adornment but also in wall-painting and wood-carving. The chelik desire that their ghotul really should be 'lovely as a bison's horns'. In many of the Jhoria ghotul there are excellently carved pillars. These may be seen at Almer, Nayanar, Remawand, Amgaon, Bandopal, Malinar, Kober and elsewhere. At Almer, one of the pillars has Siddari birds at the top, another has tortoises. On the body of the pillars are carvings of the moon, boys and girls dancing the Hulki, elephants. Down the pillar there are three *pidhs*, the seats that are supposed to hold it up. At Amgaon also, each of the pillars has four of these *pidhs* 'for the roof to sit on'. At Nayanar, one of the pillars is decorated with tortoises and another has hooded snakes projecting from all four corners. In Malinar, there are carvings on all the pillars—combs beautifully fashioned, a boy with a large phallus, a realistic bow and arrow, a snake. Outside, as at Remawand, there are pillars in the fence with remarkable designs clearly illustrated in Plate LXXII. At Jhakri I saw a fine pillar ingeniously carved to make a wooden ball inside with no way of putting it in or taking it out. At Binjhe too the Sirdar had carved some good pillars and had made windows in the ghotul with serrated bars.

Phallic symbols are very common.[1] In nearly every ghotul there is somewhere the representation of the vagina, often about two feet from the ground

[1] Similar phallic symbols occur in the Juang and Bhuiya and in some Uraon dormitories. The Juang often make a row of breasts right across the main beam of the roof. So do the Kond. Hutton describes carvings of men and women 'in a condition of sexual excitement' in Naga morung.—Hutton, *Diaries*, op. cit., p. 48.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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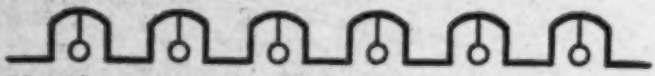
on the central pillar. In the small Kolur ghotul there is one slender pillar covered with carvings of the vagina, as always showing the clitoris, but here there was a double clitoris and a clitoris upside down.

At Markabera there were similar carvings of the vagina with the clitoris.

Often a chelik may be seen with an enormous penis, a motiari in his arms. The boys say that these carvings are very useful as an approach to girls. It may be that the vagina in the central pillar is the relic of a custom now forgotten of initiating smaller boys by pressing them against it.[1]

The walls of the ghotul are often decorated with drawings and paintings. In 1940 there was a fine display in the Remawand ghotul. The following year I saw a frieze of fantastic paintings (illustrated in Plate LXVIII) at More Berma. At Netgaon there were models of motiari, tigers and a monkey. In Urdabera there was a model of a chelik with his motiari, and over the door a mud model of a horse. In Deogaon, there were modellings of a chelik and motiari riding on a horse. At Kuntpadar, one wall was well decorated with drawings of a boy, a vagina, a girl, a bow and arrow and the sun and moon. At Palki there was the representation of a bird trap:



But this might equally well be a sexual symbol, similar to the design of the phallus within the vagina that I noted at Metawand:

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The day-time visitor to a ghotul will find little enough there by way of furniture. Cots are never used; everyone sleeps on the ground. Seats and stools are rare, but in many ghotul are to be found long narrow pieces of wood raised some two inches from the ground. These are the *kutul* which may be used either as seats or pillows. Some are very long and suggest the custom of several boys and girls sleeping together. They are often carved with geometric designs, figures of boys and girls, crude representations of the vagina. I have one with four breasts carved on its under-side. Occasionally you may see a *kutul* with a little drawer hollowed out below for storing necklaces or other ornaments during the night. As far as I know these head-rests are the corporate property

FIG. 54. *Kutul* from Talabera showing small drawer for keeping ornaments. *Length 1' 7"*

[1] A remarkable parallel from an English Public School (Repton) is provided in Denton Welch's *Maiden Voyage* (London, 1943), p. 48. The author is describing the House dormitory. 'Two lips had been painted on one of the beams and all new boys had to

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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of the ghotul, though they are usually appropriated by particular boys for the period of their membership.

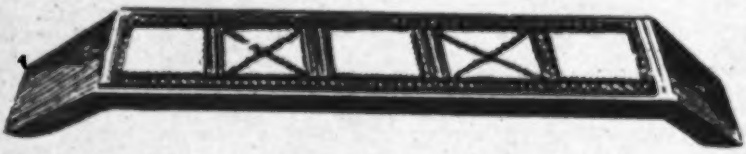

FIG. 55. Carved head-rest from Markabera
Length 3' 6"

In eastern Kondagaon drums are usually kept in the ghotul; at Masora a dhol-drum hangs under the verandah roof—it is the local habitation of Lingo

FIG. 56. Carved underside of wooden head-rest from Kumli
Length 4' 1"

Pen. At Dongrigura and other villages in this area, the whole ceiling is of drums, a fine and impressive sight. Special officers are appointed to provide rope for hanging them up and to see that they are kept in good order.

Flutes are often pushed into the thatch, but dancing-sticks are kept in the shrine of the Village Mother. I have never seen the emblem of a god, a flag or a 'horse' in the ghotul, nor any village symbol, but in Palli Barkot there was a bundle of blessed seed hanging from the roof.

There are often little holes in the wall for keeping tobacco and other small treasures. Sometimes too there are holes in the floor—for husking the rice that is brought home from the Pus Kolang and other expeditions. In one or two ghotul I have seen holes low down in the wall to serve as urinals. Outside in the courtyard there may be a large flat stone for washing clothes, but this is probably an innovation for the benefit of outsiders.

Inside the ghotul compound there is generally a stack of grass for thatching the roofs. Outside are tall piles of firewood, which may be stacked criss-cross about a central pole or piled up in the forked branches of a tree. Sometimes long poles are stood upright against and round a tree. In Jhakri I saw near the ghotul four different ways of storing the chelik's wood—it was stacked horizontally criss-cross round a tree; it was laid in parallel rows between two trees; it was criss-crossed between two upright poles tied together at the top by a rope; and it was stacked upright against a tree.

These stores of wood play an important part in the consciousness of every Muria boy, for his earliest ghotul memories are of his duty to add one or two pieces to them every evening, failure to do so earning dreaded punishments.

pull themselves up by their arms, to kiss them. I remember straining up, and at last reaching the yellow pitch pine and the two crimson lips. They looked indecent, for some reason; as if they were the drawing of another part of the body.' If the boys were not quick or could not reach the lips, they were flicked with wet towels as an encouragement.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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CHAPTER ELEVEN

TWO TYPES OF GHOTUL

I

BEFORE proceeding further it is essential that we distinguish carefully between two different types of ghotul, for these are so sharply differentiated by rule and custom and the psychological conditions of each are so distinct that until this is done we can get no clear picture of the intimate relations between chelik and motiari.

The fundamental principle of the first type of dormitory, which is sometimes called the *jodidâr*[1] or 'yoking' ghotul, is that of fidelity to a single partner during the whole of the pre-marital period. Each chelik is paired off with a motiari; he is formally 'married' to her; she may even take the feminine form of his title as her own. Divorce is allowed, though infidelity is punished.

In the second type of ghotul, which is probably a later development of the classic model, any kind of lasting attachment between chelik and motiari is forbidden. No one can say that such and such a motiari is *his* girl; if anyone sleeps with a particular girl for more than three days at a time, he is punished.

In all other matters, whether of discipline, routine, social duty or recreation, there is no difference between the two types of ghotul. We must, however, carefully distinguish them for their sexual customs and psychological conditions.

The *jodidâr* ghotul is, I think, the original form of the Muria dormitory. In the first place, it is most widely distributed in the more primitive parganas—the Chota Dongar, Dugal and Karangal—and in the neighbourhood of the Abujhmar Mountains. It has retained its place most successfully among the Jhoria, who are undoubtedly the oldest of the Muria groups. Secondly, the Muria themselves describe the other type of ghotul as a modern improvement intended to eliminate scandals and the danger of pregnancy. The change from one type to the other is still going on. At Karangaon, which was formerly

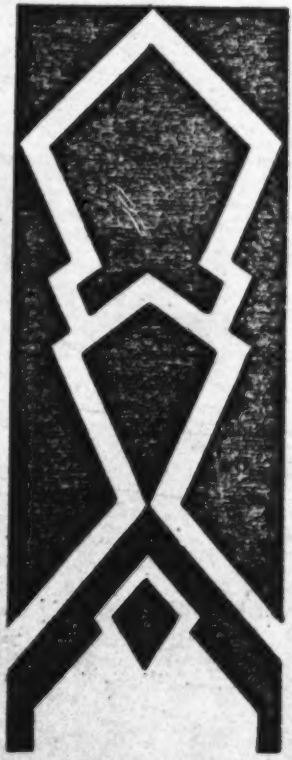

FIG. 57. Carving on the pillars of the ghotul at Almer

[1] A *jodi* or *jori* is the word used for a life-long friend, yoke-fellow or husband and wife. A *jodi* is something definitely more than a temporary lover. It is the person yoked to whom one will pull the heavy plough of life. See V. Elwin and S. Hivale, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Bombay, 1944), pp. 240f.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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But 'divorce' is allowed. I was given a vivid account by a chelik of the Kapsi ghotul of how this is arranged. If a motiari has intercourse with another boy, her own chelik reports the matter to the Sirdar saying, 'My wife has left her house and made another; for many days she lived and fed with me, but now she has run away and my honour is ruined. How can I live in a broken house, how can my work prosper in a field of weeds?'

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[531]

FIG. 58. Ghotul carvings at Nayanar
Slightly enlarged

Then the Sirdar calls the girl and says, 'Well, girl, why have you left your husband? Do you really want to forsake him and live with this other boy?' If the girl has made up her mind, she may answer, 'Yes, I want to live with this boy. My honour has gone to him'. The Sirdar then says to the second boy, 'How can you live with another chelik's wife? Think well, are you going to keep her, or will you send her away again?' The boy replies, 'I didn't fetch the girl; she came to my mat of her own accord. Now how can I quarrel with her or drive her away? Her husband must have neglected her or beaten her'.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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TWO TYPES OF GHOTUL

found alone in the ghotul with him. A Muria girl never covers her head,[1] but at least she must not undo her hair in his presence. When the elder brother is away from the ghotul his 'wife' is allowed to sleep with her '*dewar*', the younger brother.

A chelik does not seem to have to avoid entirely his brother's daughters; in the ghotul he may abuse them or flirt with them, but he ought not to sleep with one of them. But they can massage him, as indeed his own sisters can. They call him *sidwa* in the ghotul. This leads us to the interesting provision that close relations should not address each other by their ghotul titles, but by terms of relationship, thus continually reminding themselves and one another how they are related and that they must behave.

What is the reason for these rules of avoidance? The ban on the younger brother's wife is probably to safeguard the position of the younger brother, always in jeopardy as a hundred folk-tales show. In the ghotul certainly it serves as a valuable protection to a younger boy, whose brother might well be the all-powerful Sirdar or Diwan. Similarly, the rule of avoidance between a boy and his motiari's elder sister, who might be the almost equally powerful Belosa or head of the girls, prevents her from taking advantage of her position to seduce a boy away from his 'lawful wife'.

There does not appear to be any taboo on brothers and sisters witnessing each other's erotic adventures in the ghotul, provided they do not discuss them with each other and, of course, strictly avoid any relations between themselves. It is not, however, considered improper for a brother to have full knowledge of and to hear all about his sister's love affairs. Once in Binjhli a boy told me in Gondi how he had dreamt that he was having intercourse with a certain girl. The girl's own brother interpreted for me without embarrassment.

A sister sleeps every night with a boy in the presence of her brother. A brother flirts and makes love and sleeps with girls before his sister. They seem to be quite unembarrassed and both behave naturally.

FIG. 59. Wall-decoration from the Remawand ghotul
Height 6"

[1] What Hoffmann said so charmingly of the Munda is true also of the Muria girl: 'Nothing but a load or a flower is ever seen on the head of a Munda woman.'

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

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as due to the separation of a chelik from his motiari. This occurred in 1932 and was, as we should expect, in a *jodidār* ghotul, at Amgaon in the Karangal Pargana. Chaitu and Munga—I do not know their ghotul titles—the boy about twenty years old and the girl about eighteen—were greatly attached to each other and dreaded the thought of separation. They each begged their parents to let them marry, but Munga's father was adamant and married her to Dasru of the Markabera ghotul, a different Dasru, of course, from the one

[31]

FIG. 60. Carving in the ghotul at Nayanar
Height 4½"

I have just mentioned. After the marriage she was taken to Markabera, where the chelik diverted themselves as usual by shutting her up with the new husband whom she did not love. Before she left Amgaon, she was taken round the village to say good-bye and every household made their contributions for the ghotul feast that would be held a week after the marriage.

When the time came, chelik and motiari went singing through the pretty wooded country that separates Amgaon from Markabera and invited Munga to the feast. Her husband could not refuse, though he must have known there was danger in Amgaon, but it was so near—only two miles away—that he let her go. When she reached her old home, she went to meet Chaitu in the lonely corner of a field; he had brought some liquor for her, and they sat down to have a farewell drink together. But a little girl, Chaitu's younger sister, followed them and ran to tell her father. He hurried to the spot, caught the two lovers

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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them both. The Gaita at Kollibera said that a chelik could have congress three times a night and it would do no harm, but if he went to the same girl more than three days running he would fall ill and she might conceive.

The modern type of ghotul breaks up the coital sequence and is thus supposed to lessen the danger of conception. Statistics, however, show that this is not so. Among 2000 men, 80 made motiari pregnant during their ghotul period; of these 25 or 1 in 28·8 belonged to *jodidār* ghotul, and 55 or 1 in 23·2 to the modern type.

• [531]

FIG. 61. Carving on the door of a private house at Bandopal
Slightly enlarged

X 883 836

A more genuine reason for the prevalence of the newer rules is the Muria temperament which is fundamentally hostile to individualism, to exclusiveness, and to any kind of 'possessiveness'. The Muria believe that if everyone belongs to everyone else in the ghotul there will be no room for jealousy. I am not at the moment thinking whether this is true or not, but it is certainly what

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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It is equally offensive to the ghotul spirit for a chelik and motiari to fall openly in love and to insist on sleeping together to the exclusion of the rest. When they do this the others get jealous and irritated. If a girl, who has thus given way to her feelings, then goes to comb the hair of another boy, he says, 'Don't touch my head, go and do your lover's; I am not a boy, you never take any notice of me'. None of the chelik will let her massage them. If this treatment is not successful they catch the offenders by the hand and drag them out of the ghotul saying, 'Come no more to our ghotul, sleep in your own houses, have a lonely marriage without us, for we won't come to it'. In Kabonga, where such an incident occurred in 1941, the Kotwar said that after they had expelled the boy and girl, the boy very quickly repented, paid a fine of liquor and was readmitted. The girl was more obstinate. After a time the Kotwar went to her house and said that if she would sleep with each of the three leading boys on three successive nights, he would let her return. In the end she agreed to this and was accepted back into the ghotul. A similar incident occurred at Sirsi where a girl insisted on trying to sleep always with the same boy. The others said, 'Is there only one chelik? Aren't we chelik too?' and at last turned them both out. They were only readmitted when they gave a rupee's worth of liquor to the company.

• [531]

FIG. 62. Carving on a pillar in the ghotul at Almer

In a number of ghotul this system of complete equality has broken down and the three leading boys, the Sirdar or Diwan and his counsellors, including probably the Kotwar, have the right either to have a permanent partner just as in the older type of ghotul, or to choose their own partner whenever a change is made, without reference to the Kotwar. When this is done, and it happens generally in the bigger ghotul where there may be as many as sixty or seventy members, the leaders still insist on the rule of

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Carved pillar at
Chandabera

Plate LXXII

Carved pillar at
Remawand

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1 and 3 Carved pillars at Chandabera
2 Carving on the pillar of a shrine at Phauda

Plate LXXIII

[p. 356 (a)]

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Pillar at Binjhe with the chelik who carved it

Drawing old ce... number-...

Plate LXXIV

[534]

Carving ... a pi... drum ... Dunpui

[p. 356(b)]

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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māma' and so on. As they give the salute they stretch out their hands, sometimes both hands, lower and then raise them in a pretty gesture. Often

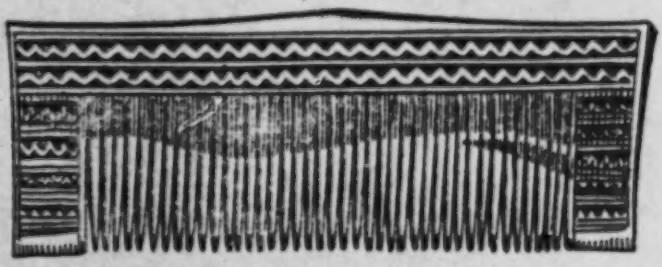

FIG. 67. Carved wooden comb from Toinar
Length 6"

they only use one hand, laying it on head or shoulder; in the east of Kondagaon they put both hands on the head.

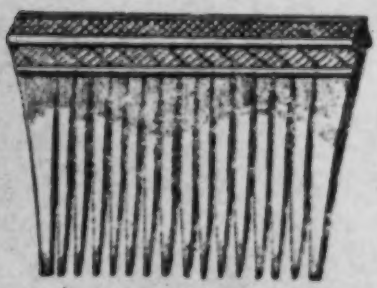

FIG. 68 A comb from the Narayanpur Tahsil
Width 2¾"

FIG. 69. A comb from Phulpar
Width 3¼"

When the boys have finished, the motiari go round in the same way, with the same gestures and salutes, generally speaking in high, almost artificial voices. In Phulpar the girls did not say Johar, but repeated the ghotul title twice, thus—'Gaita, Gaita' or 'Kotwar, Kotwar'. A girl should not salute a boy to whom she is betrothed or her Lamhada, and she must be very careful about using the proper terms of relationship—for by this means she is reminded of the tribal laws of avoidance. In some ghotul this ceremony is performed twice, once when the company first assembles and

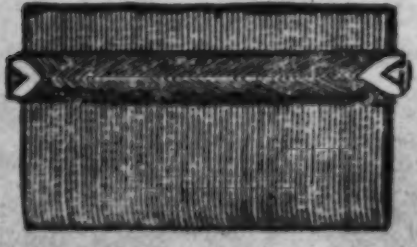

FIG. 70. A bamboo comb, of a type sometimes made by Muria for sale in the bazaars
Width 2¾"

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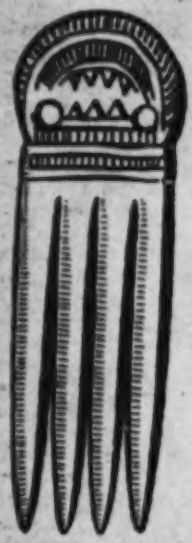


FIG. 74. Comb of a type often used in the Abujhmar foothills
Length 3½"

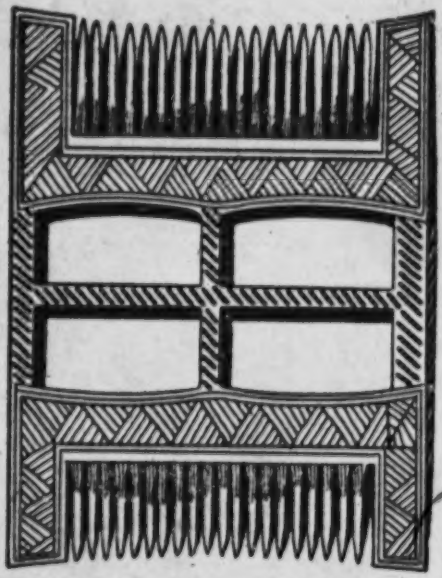
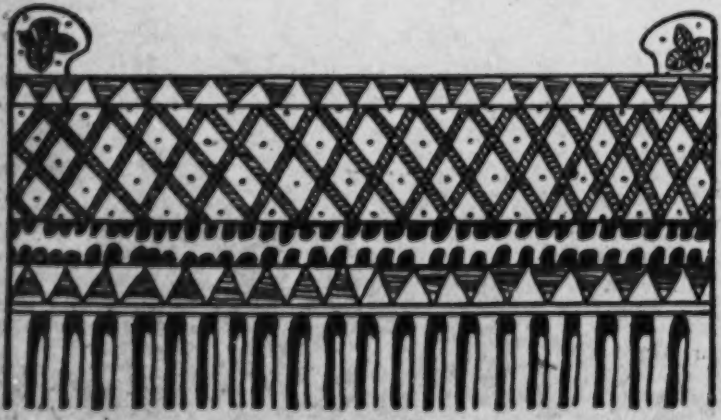


FIG. 73. Double comb from Bhanpuri
Height 4½"



From Paul Schebesta's article 'The Decorative Art of the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula' in *JRAS* (1929), p. 738
FIG. 76. Malayan comb
(See p. 380a)

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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each other's arms on the sleeping-mat. They often have to lie very close together; sometimes two boys have one girl between them; many of the couples actually touch each other. In the big ghotul real lovers and those who intend to have sexual intercourse may go and sleep in the smaller huts in the compound.

In ghotul where the motiari always sleep in the ghotul, bedtime is a simple matter of routine. In places where they only stay on sometimes, they go singing to their own house or verandah. When they are not sure what to do, they stay on till the Sirdar says, 'Well, girls, are you going to sleep here or are you going home?' The Bekoa answers, 'It's very late, I think we'd better stay here' or 'There's a tiger about, it's not safe to go'. The Sirdar says, 'Then go to your mats at once and don't keep us awake any longer'.

FIG. 77. Tobacco-box in the shape of a wheel
Width 3½"

In Chandabera, the boys told me that the girls often said, 'Let's go home tonight' and ran away. But if a boy was anxious to sleep with his girl, he would ask the Kotwar to keep them and he always did.

FIG. 76. Comb with carved leopard
Width 5"

FIG. 78. The *kasud-gota* or tortoise box
Height 4"

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Fig. 80. Bird-comb from Chandabera
Height 4½"

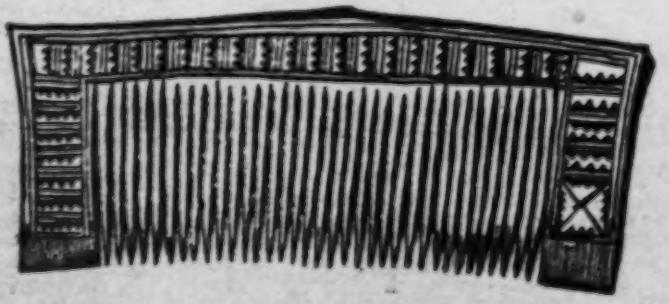

Fig. 81. Comb from Bhurpal
Length 5½"

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FIG. 82. Tobacco-box from the Mardapal Pargana
Height 5"

FIG. 83. *Kalavi-gota* from Borpal
Height 7½"

FIG. 84. *Dudawg-gota*. A small tobacco-box 'as round as a girl's breast'
Height 1½"

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THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

The pubic hairs, reference to which can be made the most inflammatory of insults, are entirely removed by girls. They are supposed to smear the hairs with wood-ash and pull them out. 'If a woman uses a razor for this', we were told at Phauda, 'she will become very heavy after death, and the men who carry out her body will laugh and say, "She's one of those who used a razor".'[1]

III. Combs

Betle marrāte pungār puy ānta

On a dry tree blossoms a flower—A comb

In the intimate life of chelik and motiari the comb plays a most important part. It is used every night by the motiari when they tidy the hair of the boys. It is used to titillate the skin of back and arms. In many places it is one of the most popular forms of personal adornment. Both boys and girls wear it but it is essentially a girl's possession and a girl's decoration. In Binjhli I remember seeing a row of girls walking in file; each of them had ten or fifteen combs arranged in lines on the left side of the head. But there is no rule about this. Sometimes the combs are in the back hair, sometimes on both sides. Boys wear one or two combs in the turban, or stuck in the back hair.

Different types of comb are illustrated in Figs. 67-70, 74-5, and 80-1. I believe the patterns are simply for decorative purposes and have no magical significance. Thurston has an interesting passage, which unfortunately he does not illustrate, about the strikingly similar designs of the combs of the Negritos of Malacca and the Kadir of the Anaimalai Hills.[2] Preuss had worked out a theory that the patterns were not geometrical, but consisted of a series of hieroglyphics.[3] Thurston, however, believed that the Kadir comb decorations were only conventional. The bamboo combs worn by Semang women are said to be talismans against disease,[4] but neither Kadir nor Muria combs seem to have this meaning. The Muria combs are often carved with phallic symbols—but their aim is not magical, but the very practical one of arousing sexual interest.[5]

For a girl to possess a large number of combs does not necessarily mean that she is specially popular; more probably it implies that she has a very

[1] With this may be compared a Gond proverbial saying recorded in Mandla. 'The eaters lifted up the pubic hairs to make the corpse lighter, but found it made no difference.'

[2] Thurston, op. cit., Vol. III, pp. 27f.

[3] K. T. Preuss, 'Die Zauberbilder Schriften der Negrito in Malaya' in *Globus*, 1899. Schebesta, however, considers that this, like the flower-pattern theory of Vaughan Stevens, is 'entirely baseless'. P. Schebesta, 'The Decorative Art of the Aborigines of the Malay Peninsula', *JRAS* (1929), p. 749. (See Fig. 76)

[4] W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906), Vol. I, pp. 396ff. For the magical significance of the comb, see also J. F. Campbell, *Popular Tales* (London, 1890), Vol. I, p. lxxi; L. Garnett, *Greek Folk Poesy* (London, 1896), Vol. II, p. 437. The occurrence of the comb on early Celtic monuments points to the value set on it. See Macculloch, op. cit., p. 180.

[5] In several tribes, the gift of a comb is an essential part of the marriage ceremony. This is so among the Muduvar.—Thurston, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 93. The Kadir bridegroom should always make a comb and present it to his future wife just before marriage or at the end of the ceremony.—Ibid., Vol. III, p. 28. At a Kuki marriage, the priest presents husband and wife with small combs. 'Combs, perhaps these particular combs, are very sacred things. It is very unlucky to lose them, and man and wife only may use the same comb. When a man dies, his comb is buried with him, and his near relations break their combs and must roam with dishevelled hair for a few days before they renew them.'—Dalton, op. cit., p. 47.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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PERSONAL ADORNMENT AND POSSESSIONS

The Muria wash their houses with a solution of cow-dung and water. When this has dried they apply a whitewash of clean mud from the jungle. A good

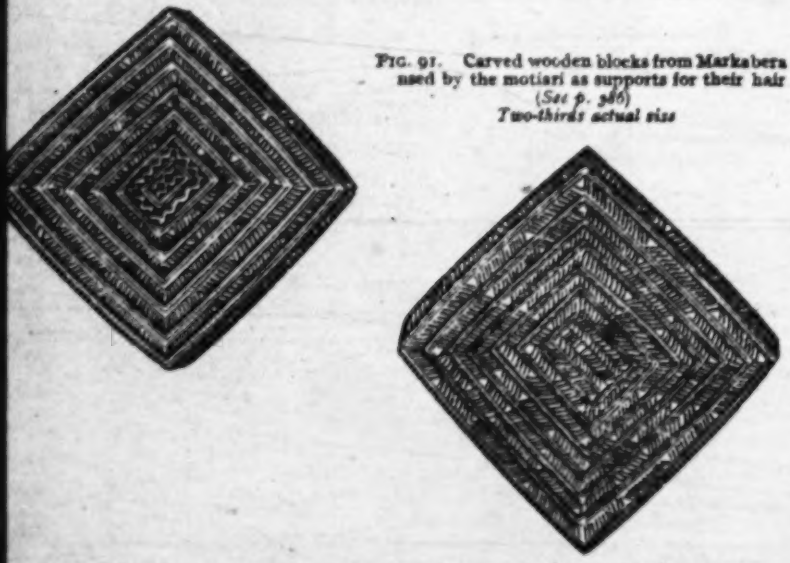

FIG. 91. Carved wooden blocks from Markabera used by the motiari as supports for their hair
(See p. 386)
Two-thirds actual size

housewife should do this every day. The motiari must keep the ghotul spotlessly clean—'This is how she learns to keep her husband's house clean when she leaves us', explained the boys at Berma.

Chelik and motiari wash their clothes frequently, almost as often as they bathe; the older people, naturally less concerned about their personal appearance, more anxious about economy, wash them less. The clothes are put in a pot with the ash of saja, dhaura, sesamum, siari-creeper or rice-chaff, and are boiled. When ready the pot is carried to the river, the clothes removed and washed by being beaten with the hands on a stone and rinsed again and again in the water. The clothes of a woman in her period, and especially her pubic cloth, are boiled on the river bank. At Temrugaon I saw many empty pots lying on the bank and even floating in the pools which were used for this purpose, for they cannot of course be taken back to the house.

FIG. 92. Boys' hair-retainer made by a local blacksmith out of the ribs of an old umbrella
(See p. 387)

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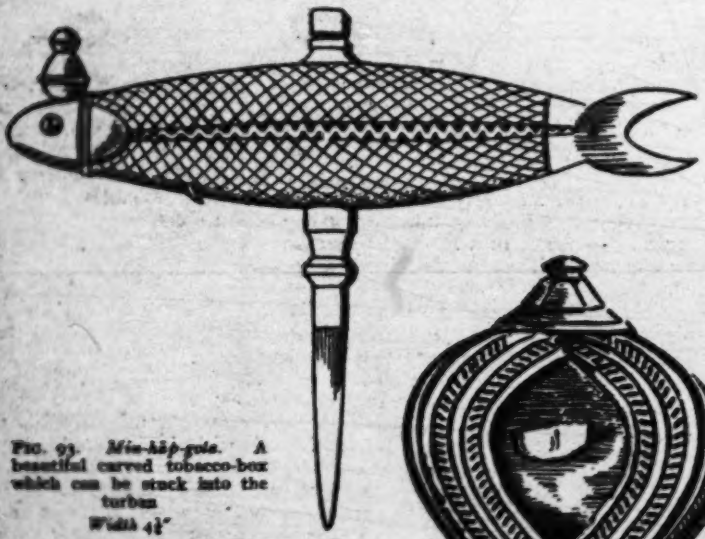

FIG. 93. *Mīn-kāp-gola.* A beautiful carved tobacco-box which can be stuck into the turban
Width 4½"

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FIG. 94. *Pudo-gola*, with an obvious representation of the vagina
Height 3½"

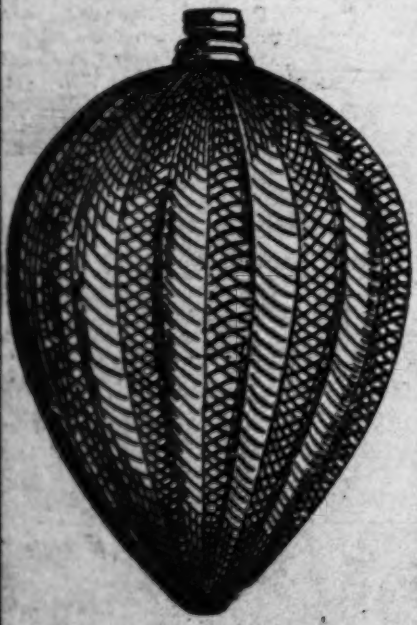

FIG. 95. Tobacco-box from Penjori decorated with carvings supposed to represent the bones of the *mīn* fish
Height 4½"

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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pipes. These are lit with little bits of glowing coal picked from the fire, and when half-smoked or not in use are generally kept tucked into the turban or hidden in a hole in the ghotul wall.

But the chelik do not rely only on the tobacco supplied them in the ghotul. Any enterprising boy has tucked into his loin-cloth or hanging (sometimes with a bunch of bells or cowries) at his waist a specially-made tobacco-pouch. These *gota* are, as a glance at the illustrations in Figs. 82-4, 93-5, 99, 103-4, and 109-14 will show, elaborate and varied. They are of every size and shape. One is like a fish, another carved like a wheel, a third resembles a mango. Some are of garud, moda or koraya wood, others are cut from the kernel of a fruit, a few are of brass. The stoppers are fitted tightly with a little lac. Some are covered with the testes of a goat or sambhar. Most are elaborately carved.

Many of the *gota*-pouches are named. There is the *dudong-gota*, round as a girl's breast; the *chakka-gota* (Fig. 77), a beautifully carved wheel; the *hemul*, or tortoise pouch (Fig. 79) with its elaborate designs; the charming *marka-batta-gota* (Fig. 112) shaped like a mango; the *halāri-gota* (Fig. 83); the *min-hāp-gota*, with its decoration of fish bones; the *tumur-gota*, whose carving resembles the flowers of the ebony tree; the *girna* or lizard *gota* (Fig. 82); and the *damera-āching-singār gota* (Fig. 110) with its elaborate silver decorations. Some of the *gota* have a deliberately sexual purpose; the *pude-gota* (Figs. 94 and 99) has small representations of the vagina carved on it and the *dudo-muri* (Fig. 101) has marks that are supposed to resemble the pimples round the nipples of a woman's breast. The chelik show these to girls to excite them. But, indeed, as I show in another chapter, to ask for tobacco is itself a polite way of asking a girl for sexual congress.

The Muria grow tobacco in specially fenced gardens near their houses and sometimes in enclosures made on the banks of stream or river. When it is ready, it is cut and allowed to dry in the garden. Then it is placed between layers of kodon straw 'which turns it red in a few days'. After this it is dried again, this time on the roof of the house, and finally tied up in bundles with home-made string.

VI. The Sleeping-mat

The *gih* or *masni*-mat is an important piece of ghotul furniture. When a boy joins the ghotul for the first time he is expected to bring a mat which is usually made for him by his mother or an aunt. Later on, especially in the *jodidār* ghotul, a girl ought always to make a mat for her special chelik, but elsewhere the mats seem to be made by a boy's mother, sister or some other female relative. At a marriage a new mat is usually presented to the bridegroom.

The mat is not difficult to make. A rectangle is marked out and pegs driven into the ground at its four corners. Bits of bamboo are tied between the pegs at opposite ends of the rectangle and a dozen or more strings of hemp or grass are tied from one end to the other so as to form the warp. Before they are attached, they are threaded through the holes of the *āch*, a wooden instrument illustrated in Fig. 96 which is used to beat the grass into place. The woman sits down with the *āch* before her and threads bits of reed or grass over and under the strings. After she has threaded two or three she sprinkles them with water and pulls the *āch* sharply towards her several times, thus pressing the grass into position. This is done over and over again until finally the mat is complete.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

I

"We obey our ghotul laws more faithfully than the laws of Government; for we ourselves made the ghotul laws, and so we love them."

—Common Muria saying

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THE life of the chelik and motiari is strictly regulated, and when a leader is appointed one of the powers with which he is entrusted is that of judging and punishing offenders against the ghotul code. It is surprising how important a place these punishments hold in the minds of the

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FIG. 97. Comb from Palari. The two horns are of bone-wax
Width 2½"

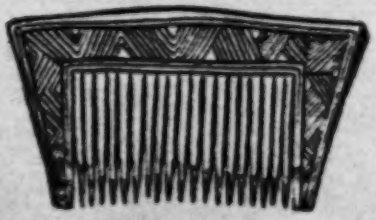

FIG. 98. Comb from Antagarh
Width 5"

FIG. 99. The *Pudo-gota*
Actual size

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

children. When they are initiated, the little boys are told—'You must come every day, or you'll be punished'. The girls are likewise told—'You must

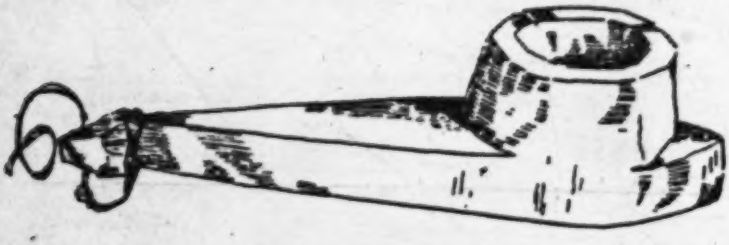

FIG. 100. Tobacco pounder
Length 15"

come every day, or you'll be punished. You must massage the chelik, or you'll be punished.' And when a girl leaves the ghotul at marriage, her

FIG. 101. The *Dudu-mur-gota*
Height 4"

FIG. 102. A Jhoria comb from Markabera
Width 3½"

most tender memories, as revealed in the farewell songs, seem to be connected with punishments. *'Dudhār gai ke lāl saithai*—The cow that gives milk:

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

every boy in turn saying, 'Johar, *mahārāj*, I have farted'. An interesting rule prohibits the other boys and girls from laughing at the offender too much. The name *padva* may be used three times but not more; anyone who carries the joke too far is fined.

FIG. 103. A brass tobacco-box made by the local Ghasia
Actual size

A bed-wetter is punished with the *khotla-pakava* described below; if incurable, he may be expelled.

Most ghotul are actually kept beautifully clean; occasional lapses are severely penalized. It is the special duty of the girls to sweep and cow-dung the building, but often the Kotwar in charge of them is punished instead. At Kabonga, when the Diwan found that the ashes of the previous day's fires had not been cleared away, he reported the matter to the Inspector who called the Kotwar and threw ash all over him. The Kotwar insisted that it was the girls' fault, not his, and so the girls were called and ash was thrown over them and pushed into their private parts. At Kokori also, two girls were tied to the roof by their feet and ashes put into their vaginae. 'As you've let the ghotul be dirty, we are making your privates dirty', said the boys.

It is generally the chalik who have to see to the surroundings of the ghotul. At Palari in 1941, the Munshi, Sipahi and Likasdar were told to clear a space in front of the building for a dance, but they failed to do so. They were hung together from the roof until they begged forgiveness and promised to do the work at once. The younger boys are often punished for failing to bring their daily tribute of wood—a task they all dislike. In the Jamkot

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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was similarly punished for failing in his duty to make the chelik and motiari work at a wedding. As a boy Bindo punished the ghotul Kotwar for disobeying his orders to fetch the motiari in the evening; fifty years afterwards he still remembers the incident with satisfaction.

When the head of the ghotul is penalized, it is a convention in some ghotul that the motiari should beg to be punished in his stead. This happened at Chandabera when I was there, and the Sirdar was fined for not making proper arrangements for his visitors. The girls implored to be allowed to suffer for him.

FIG. 104. A sun and moon tobacco-box
Height 2½"

FIG. 105. Boy's necklace, from Kajen, of cowries strung together with red and 'silver' beads

Should the head of the ghotul turn out a bully or a slacker, the chelik and motiari take the help of the village headman and remove him. This does not happen very often because there is plenty of time to test a boy before he is appointed. But it is not always possible to judge how far power is likely to corrupt character, and scandals do occur. I have recorded a number of cases from the history of the last few years. In Mannegaon, the Leyur-Gaita was removed for bullying and abusing the children. The Malik of Esalnar was once degraded for bullying. The Kotwar of the Berma ghotul a few years ago got very much above himself and used 'to punish for four hours instead of one' until the members rebelled. They fined him a rupee, deprived him of office, made him a 'subject' with the name of Silledar, and appointed the Kandki in his place. Recently in Kehalakot the Kotwar gave so much trouble to the girls that he was fined eight annas and removed.

Laziness also disqualifies a boy from holding high office. In Atargaon the Mazjhi was dismissed 'for not working properly'. The Kokori Chalki was degraded to the rank of Kotwar for laziness and the Kotwar was appointed

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

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Kaxing taliyana is the very common Indian punishment of making someone squat down on the ground and get up and down holding his ears with his

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FIG. 109. Tobacco pouch with bell and tusk ornaments
Height of pouch 3½"

hands. It is difficult, exhausting and undignified. But it is not very painful and it leaves no trace, which probably accounts for its popularity among subordinate officials. In Lihagaon, pebbles were held to the ears while the culprit was pushed up and down twenty-five to fifty times. This was how the Manjhi punished Dursal Rani in the song recorded at p. 608.

At Nanipodar, the chelik connected this punishment with a story of a Raja and a dancing girl of the Mirdangiya caste—whose girls are famous for their wit and beauty.

> There was a Mirdangiya. She danced before a Raja. He was so pleased that he said, 'Ask what you will and I'll give it to you'. She said, 'Spit on the floor and then lick up the mess'. The Raja said, 'How can a Raja do such a thing?' Then the Mirdangiya said, 'Very well then, give me the turban from your head'. He did so and she wore it herself and went away well pleased.

The movements of a girl jumping up and down holding her ears are supposed to resemble the Mirdangiya dancing before the Raja, and the chelik taunt the girls saying, 'Ho re Mirdangiya! Today you've become Mirdangiya'. To which the girls reply, 'We are Kanchnin [good and beautiful] girls. If we were Mirdangiya we would be dancing and you'd have to give us your turbans.'

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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clan and relationship rules may lead to this extreme penalty. It is indeed extreme, for it means the death of youth, the loss of company and the shame of a wedding without dancers.

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FIG. 110. Carved tobacco-box from Nayanar
Actual size

That is, in fact, the final sanction of the ghotul rules—the fear that the chelik and motiari will refuse to attend one's wedding. It is no idle threat; it has been done; it has been still more often threatened, and the parents have had to pay a fine. Once at Jhakri the Piosa failed to do her share of bringing leaves at someone's marriage, and the boys said, 'This girl is too great for us. She evidently likes to be alone. Well, she shall marry alone'. When her marriage day arrived there was a great disturbance and the elders of several villages had to pacify the offended boys. But at last, after her parents had given a gift of liquor, they agreed to assist.

No reader of Chapter V can fail to see the importance of this threat. No wedding can proceed without chelik and motiari. Their absence would mean that on the greatest day of one's life there was drabness, mockery and disgrace. So long as this ultimate sanction remains, the youngsters submit cheerfully to all the penalties, harsh as they may sometimes seem, that the leaders of the ghotul may inflict.[1]

[1] Anyone who thinks the ghotul discipline too hard should read a curious paper by Thurston on 'Corporal Punishment in Vernacular Schools' in India, in which forty-two different manifestations of pedagogic sadism are listed.—*Ethnographic Notes*, pp. 433–40.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

organs' into a slit in a sal sapling.[1] In *Oraon Religion*[2] he says that this is to be found 'in most *dhumkuria* houses'. He only mentions the name of one village, however, Borhambey. We saw the slit there, but did not find it in any of the other dormitories we visited, nor has W. G. Archer been able to find any trace of the custom elsewhere.

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761
171

FIG. 111. A tortoise tobacco-box
Height 4½"

FIG. 112. *Marka-batta-gota* or mango tobacco-box
Height 2½"

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It is probable that the 'dormitory slit' was chiefly used for punishing refractory boys. According to the *dhangar* who talked to Shamrao Hivale at Mandar, it was used as a punishment for boys who were shy or sulky and refused to join in the communal games and dances. 'A lump of red earth is put on the pillar, and the Mahato stands by with a stick, and hits us on the legs and tells us to push our penis into the earth, and then he pushes us against it again and again till we become red. If a boy is sulky, we bring him at night to the *dubri* (mistress) and we push his penis into the slit until he cries and promises not to offend again. We all hit him and push him to and fro against the pillar till his penis hurts and he cries.'

Discipline in the Naga morung is, as we might expect, more rigorous and the punishments more drastic. 'Among the boys of the village', says Mills,

> there is a certain amount of rough play, and a bumptious or obnoxious youngster is taught his place exactly as he is in an English Public School. He may sit down in the dark and find stinging leaves have been put ready for him. Or a more elaborate punishment may be inflicted which many a mother in England would not approve of for her darling. A plank is laid like a see-saw over a log. One end is weighted down with a wooden pillow. The boy has to jump on the other end and the wooden pillow flies up and hits him on the back of the neck.[3]

There is nothing in Bastar to compare with the Naga bullying, a process by which young boys are hardened to face every kind of danger and difficulty.

[1] Roy, *The Oraons*, p. 243.
[2] p. 53.
[3] Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, p. 32.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 A W32 Gond A W32
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both were Sori. So were the Beldar and Beldarin, the Sirdar and Sirdarin and the Supedar and Supedarin. If members of the same sept could be 'married' to each other, the feeling against clan-incest *inside the ghotul* cannot be very strong. So long as the relation does not result in pregnancy it does not seem to matter greatly. No one knows except the chelik and motiari—and they never tell.

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FIG. 113. Carved tobacco-box from Markabera
Height 2½"

But if there is a pregnancy it is a serious matter. In such a case, I was told at Kabonga, the members of the ghotul assemble and pass judgement. 'Look, brother, look, sister, you are both of the same clan; you are brother-sister to each other, yet you have done this evil. If the elders hear of it, we can give them no answer. We ourselves do not think it sin; it was the lust of youth, you were mad with love; but the elders will think it sin.' And they insist that the boy should bring an abortifacient. In Munjmeta when a Katlami boy fell in love with a girl of the Wadder clan—these are forbidden to one another—the ghotul members held a meeting and solemnly warned them that they would be fined if they continued to sleep together and that if the girl became pregnant it would be most serious for them both. But I heard that they took no notice.

The offence is usually condoned by a heavy fine, anything from six to twelve rupees to the panchayat and a calf or pig to the clan-god. But so long as the lovers are willing to separate, they are not barred from marrying in the usual

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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GHOTUL DISCIPLINE

For months everyone must have known all about it. Before the girl's marriage Kule's breach of the clan laws was complete and open; it must constantly have been discussed in the ghotul, and the elders must have known of it. Yet until the day of the 'trial' it had never been openly proclaimed in the village that he had offended against the laws of the tribe. That was too much for him, he saw his girl lost to him, a life-long shame, and heavy penalties. So he killed himself.

FIG. 114. Carved tobacco-box from Metawand
Height 2¾"

There was another case in 1936 in Kerawahi when a chelik and motiari [1] who belonged to the same clan fell in love with one another. They often used to slip outside the ghotul at night and sleep together. After a time the girl found herself pregnant. When the matter became known, there was a great scandal and the elders announced that they would hold a panchayat. The boy was so ashamed and so afraid of paying the fine that was certain to be inflicted, that he hanged himself. The girl was afterwards married to another boy, but was punished—the people said—by excessive menorrhagia. She grew thinner and thinner, and after a year her husband left her and married someone else.

IX

I have heard of very few cases of incest between near relatives. In spite of all the joking, in spite also of the close proximity in which near relatives grow up together in the ghotul, I think that the rules are kept. On the rare occasions that they are broken, the act is regarded with severe censure. At Sahimunda a girl was made pregnant by her own *mâmâ*, her mother's brother. She publicly accused him and he was fined. In Adenga, a Muria kept his own father's junior wife. He was excommunicated and banned from all tribal privileges. He and the woman were not even allowed to get water from the usual place. I am told that he is never to be admitted into the tribe. In the same village the Gaita kept his mother's sister, and was excommunicated.

A tale of incest from Kapsi is obviously satirical and hardly suggests approval of what was done.

> Long ago there lived an old man who married his son to a very lovely girl. When she came to his house the father at once fell in love with her. He sent his old wife and son to another village to get rice, and that evening he himself pretended to get high fever and lay groaning on his bed. The poor daughter-in-law came to him and said, 'What can I do for you?' He said, 'Ask the Departed in the granary what they want you to do'. She went to them and asked, 'What can I do for my

[1] According to the police report, the chelik was Lati, son of Dhanaji, and the motiari was Koli, daughter of Bhimram. Lati was Koli's paternal uncle. I do not know their ghotul titles.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

and for this reason the dance is sometimes known as Nei Kolang or Kukur Kolang.

At Phulpar the chelik said that they took with them whatever dog wandered round their fire and sat down near its ashes, but in other villages I have been told that they only take a dog which is carefully trained, for it is essential that it should not bark or bite or have anything to do with other dogs. In Udanpur they said that the dog was taught to dance.

The dog serves both as a mascot and to take the omens. The boys remove a bell from the shrine of the Village Mother and tie it round its neck in the name of Lingo. When they dance in a circle the dog must sit in the middle. At meal-times, the Gain gives it three handfuls of rice before anybody else is fed.

When the dancing party enters a village the chelik wait to see what the dog will do. If all is well, it sits down quietly and they stay. If it wanders off into the village and enters someone's house, it means that a pair of boys will die. If it runs out into the fields even late in the evening, it is a sign that they must move on at once. If it fights with another dog, someone will die. Should the dog leave the party and return home, it is taken as a warning of great danger.

FIG. 117. Ornamental stick carried on dancing expeditions
Full length 2' 7½"

When the chelik return to their village they sacrifice two chickens for the dog, though a boy has to be content with one, and they place stones for it on a cairn. They remove the bell from its neck and replace it in the shrine of the Village Mother. From the time the bell is tied round the dog's neck to the time it is removed, no member of the party may have sexual intercourse. But once the bell is removed, it is a sign that they are free.

In most villages the same dog accompanies the party for three years running, but at the end of that period it is expected to go mad or to be carried away by a tiger. The theory is that for three years Lingo 'possesses' the dog for the brief period of the expedition, but at the end of the time he takes the form of a tiger and carries it away.

When all is ready, about a week before Cherta-puni, the chelik put on their full dress and dance all day. They are rather solemn about this; they talk to no one and take a very superior attitude towards their girls and have nothing to do with them. The next morning, the Gaita takes them to the Village Mother's shrine where the spear of Maria Pen is kept. They dance before the shrine in a straight line, not in a circle; this is the 'Lingo Par'. The Gaita brings fire from his house in a length of smouldering rope spun from paddy-stalk fibre. With the aid of this he offers incense saying, 'These youngsters are going out to dance. Let no disease attack them on the way. Bring them home safely. Let the spear be their aid and Maria Pen go with them. If they return in safety I will give food-sacrifice'. He fixes the smouldering rope on the point of the spear and brings it out.

This was the custom in Phulpar and Kollibera; in the latter village the Gaita went on to the shrine of Thakur Deo and worshipped there with the same

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

this exchange goes so far as to include the sleeping arrangements, but I have no real information about this. Food is provided by the hosts. If the Irpu Pandum, the festival of the eating of the new mahua flowers, has not been celebrated, there is a strict taboo on the drinking of mahua spirit. If this taboo is broken the supply of flowers will fail. In Jungani there was a rule that the dance must not be performed at all until the flowers were gathered in. Here it was supposed that the noise of the stick-dance has a bad effect on the crop.

At the end of the expedition the boys and girls return to their own village and dance before the Gaita's house round and round the semur tree. The Gaita offers liquor to it, then pulls it up and throws it away. The ring is given to the leader of the dance. Finally the boys tie their sticks to a rope across a path near the village boundary in the usual way.

If there is a bazaar in the neighbourhood the boys visit it and dance in its four corners.

FIG. 121. Comb with chelik and motiari on horseback

The sticks used in this dance are called either *dandār* or *kāṭi* and are usually made of sartali wood. Before the Gaita pulls up the semur tree the boys hang their sticks upon it.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

X 583
X 484
796
535

You would not see that sort of thing on a Pus Kolang expedition. As a chelik described it at Chandabera, 'We all go together for the Mahua Dandar and have great fun. No one has a right over any girl and all play with each other'. Occasionally boys and girls of different villages fall in love and run away together.

V.. The Diwali Dances

But of all the opportunities for romantic adventure so liberally provided by Muria society, none is more exciting than the girls' Diwali dance. The word 'Diwali' is here simply an indication of date; the dances have nothing to do with the Hindu festival. Even the dates are usually wrong; I saw Diwali dances on 18 November 1940 at Binjhli, on 24 November at Remawand and on 27 November at Bandopal. The actual Diwali that year was on 24 October. I saw it again at Sirpur on 30 October 1941, though the real festival was a fortnight earlier.

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Fig. 122. Ornamented wooden axe carried by the leader of the girls on a Diwali expedition

During this season the motiari go from village to village, singing and dancing. But to the east of the main road, the Diwali is only danced in a few villages; to the south of Kondagaon it is almost unknown. Instead boys and girls go together for the Hulki.

Sometimes, the Diwali is abandoned for a time because of a scandal, sometimes on supernatural grounds. In Talabera, the girls cannot dance or sing at all, for if they do a god (*deo*) attacks them. He makes the girls tremble and fall to the ground: the Gaita has to spit and beat them with a stick to get rid of him.

There does not seem to be any special religious or magical purpose in these expeditions; they are simply for enjoyment and amorous adventure. Only girls go, led by their Belosa, and when they visit any village, only the boys of that village may be present to entertain them. The visitors dance first at the Gaita's house, then through the village; they camp in the ghotul; the local boys cook for them and entertain them. In the evening, the visiting girls and the local boys dance and play together and the dancing often lasts all night. During those long hours every one of the visitors is taken away into the jungle; the more attractive ones may be taken several times. The evenings are fruitful of love-affairs and sometimes a chelik now meets his future wife. A boy from Kapsi told me that he met

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

(i) *Manda mandi tendsim dāy pokre mām.*
Throw away the mess in the booth and go away.

5. *Neyi Tarhīna Pār.* The tedious business of anointing bride and bridegroom with oil, which continues intermittently for two days, is enlivened by some excellent dancing.

(a) *Teda mudiya tatti de.*
Stand old man and give the adze.

(b) *Gām chekli bassunda ta.*
We will sit while the sun is shining.

(c) *Barha mānz he chorun neyse lāchhu dy lāchhu mai hi dāda mai to ni chorey.*
It was Lachhu, not I, that stole the pork.

(d) *Dim dim dim kosum dim tumcho bāpcho polka dim.*
Testes! Testes! Kosum testes! The hollow testes of your father!

(e) *Dengur mundi me lamha āse, chu kābri chu.*
In the ant-hill is a hare, *Chu kābri chu.*

(f) *Teda bhuski hātum dāyi.*
Stand up, fat woman, and go to the bazaar.

(g) *Karanji gaon cho kursa, gaon kāje pursa.*
He is impotent in Karanji village; but he is a real man in ours.

FIG. 141. *Pitorha* gong

6. *Maur Tatīna Pār.* The rhythm while the bride and bridegroom are having their crowns tied on their heads.

Tatti de tatti de kamadir bābu kamadir.
Give the adze, give the adze. But the boy won't go.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

252
531
516
301
285
302

Girl cleaning grain at Tikanpal before a decorated door

301
142

Hinga, a Maria girl of Rewali

[facing p. 28]

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

refused. She abused him saying, '*Puk nak*, lick my privates', and told him to go home without her. This, he said, was impossible and she again abused him. He got so angry that he hit her on the head with a heavy piece of wood and she died immediately.

More frequently these disputes have ended in suicide. The wife of Markami Pide was in love with another man, and frequently used to leave her husband and go to stay at her mother's house where it was possible for her to meet her lover. Pide as frequently would go and bring her back and beat her. At last she killed herself in despair. Mundri, the wife of the headman of Kaklur, frequently quarrelled with her husband over the question of visiting her parents, and one day when she wished to go and her husband stopped her, she became so miserable that she hanged herself from a mango tree.

Wooden tobacco box (Length 3½")

In two cases it was the husband who committed suicide. Marvi Gutami, a young man of twenty-two years, married a girl to whom he was much attached. Indeed it is said that he loved her so much that he was quite unable to control her, and she got on the nerves of the older women in the house who lost no opportunity of venting their spite upon her. As a result she often used to go away to her mother's house, and Gutami would have to go and bring her back. One day when this happened, the youth found that she had gone into hiding elsewhere. Despairing of happiness, he returned home and hanged himself behind his house. Kawasi Hurra's wife Lakhmi did not care for him and was always slipping away to her parents' house. He brought her back five or six times, but she would run away again after staying with him for a few days. Hurra seems to have been very fond

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32
Bison Horn Maria

congress. Habka Masa killed his wife Pakli in consequence of a long dispute, but immediately before the tragedy she refused to lie with him. Barse Chappe, a polygamous invalid, was first refused by both his wives and later by his senior wife because he desired to perform the act in a semi-public place. Marvi Deva saw his wife with a man and when, probably to test her, he asked her to give herself to him and she refused, he killed his baby daughter and tried to kill her. Kosa, an almost imbecile paralytic, asked his wife to have intercourse with him; she abused him and he stabbed her to death. Doga, rejected sexually by his elder brother's widow, was so affronted that he killed her. Mundra, who so brutally treated his wife Pande, asked her to have sexual congress with him and was refused only an hour before he met his death at her hands.

Decorated banda knife (*Length* 3')

Such a refusal may also drive a man to suicide. Marvi Joga, the Waddai of Mathadi, was always quarrelling with his wife and threatening to remarry. One day at the funeral ceremony of his brother's son, he drank a lot of surem, and when he came home he tried to have intercourse with his wife. But she refused saying, 'You are always talking about another wife. Why don't you go and get one?' and she went away to sleep in the Room of the Departed. Joga, intoxicated and desperate at his wife's refusal, hanged himself.